



# Water Quality NewsFlash

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**Onsite Systems – State issues draft regulations** – An *onsite wastewater treatment system* (OWTS) is an individual or community sewage treatment system with a subsurface discharge. This category includes septic tank/leach fields and similar systems. Generally, these systems provide sewage treatment for locations that cannot connect to existing sanitary sewer systems and which consequently have to treat and dispose of their own wastewater. The new regulations will not affect underground disposal facilities for stormwater unless sewage is also involved. However, the Department does operate a number of onsite systems for sewage, for example at remote maintenance facilities and at roadside rest areas. These are currently permitted by county health departments or by WDRs (or waivers) issued by Regional Boards.

The proposed requirements are both prescriptive (minimum construction specifications) and performance-based (numeric effluent limits). Interestingly, in the proposed OWTS regulations the minimum allowable depth to seasonal high groundwater is 5 ft (or as little as 3 ft. in some cases) which is less stringent than the requirements for many stormwater infiltration systems. For stormwater systems, infiltration is generally prohibited if groundwater depth is less than 10 feet (sometimes 15 ft) below ground surface. The next step in the process will consist of "Scoping Meetings" to solicit input on topics to be addressed in the EIR that will accompany the regulations. <http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/ab885/>

**303(d) list – Status** – The 303(d) list of impaired waters is revised and updated every two years. Total maximum daily loads (TMDL), which allocate pollutant loadings to individual dischargers, must be prepared for all waterways listed (with some exceptions). State Water Resources Control Board staff expect to issue the draft 2004 list in mid to late summer. An unexpectedly high volume of data was submitted in response to last year's data solicitation for the 2004 list. In addition, all currently listed waters/pollutants need to be reassessed using the factors in the new listing policy (see *NewsFlash* 04-42). The current (2002) list is posted: [http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/tmdl/303d\\_lists.html](http://www.swrcb.ca.gov/tmdl/303d_lists.html)

**Mercury – SF Board asks refineries to track their releases** – The San Francisco Regional Water Quality Control Board is preparing a Mercury TMDL for San Francisco Bay. As part of this effort, the Board has asked the five area refineries to prepare a report identifying the fate of mercury that enters the refineries as crude oil. The Board is concerned that the mercury may be emitted into the air or otherwise released into the environment and subsequently enter the Bay through atmospheric deposition or other pathways. About 380 kg/yr of mercury enter the refineries as crude oil. Less than 1 kg/yr is released in the wastewater and about 5 kg per year of mercury ends up in automobile fuels. The other mercury may exit as other refinery products, solid waste, or air emissions.

The TMDL estimate for total Bay loading from all sources is 1,220 kg/yr. Urban stormwater is estimated to carry 160 kg/yr and a portion of this is assumed to come from atmospheric deposition. In this case, atmospheric deposition could be considered one of the primary sources for mercury and stormwater the secondary (or intermediate) source SF Board: <http://www.waterboards.ca.gov/sanfranciscobay/Agenda/02-16-05/02-16-05-7attachmentb.pdf>

WQ NewsFlash is a weekly update of storm water and related news for the Department. *Verify information before taking action on these bulletins.* Contact Betty Sanchez, [Betty\\_Sanchez@dot.ca.gov](mailto:Betty_Sanchez@dot.ca.gov) (916) 653-2115, or Fred Krieger, (510) 843-7889, [fkrieger@msn.com](mailto:fkrieger@msn.com) with questions or to be added or deleted from e-mail list. Posted online at: <http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/env/stormwater/publicat/newsflash/index.htm>